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SUBJECT: BURMA, BURUNDI, COLOMBIA AND UGANDA ADDRESS SC
WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

¶1. (SBU) The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (WGCAAC) held a formal meeting chaired by Mexican Permanent Representative Claude Heller on October 12 to adopt the group's conclusions on Burma and to discuss the Secretary General's reports on children and armed conflict in Burundi, Colombia and Uganda. UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Radhiko Coomaraswamy briefed the group on the contents of each report. Colombian Vice President Santos Calderon represented Colombia's delegation, Burundi Permanent Representative Gahutu and Ugandan Deputy Permanent Representative Mugoya each responded to the Secretary General's reports on their respective countries. Burmese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General of International Organizations Thant Kyaw gave a statement in response to the WGCAAC's adoption of conclusions on Burma.

¶2. (SBU) Burmese Director General Thant Kyaw outlined the positive measures that Burma has taken to address child soldiers, including passing a law prohibiting military recruitment of those under 18. He regretted that "anti-government groups" had provided unverified information to the Secretary General which was included in the report. Kyaw highlighted Burma's work with the UN Task force to update its action plan on children and armed conflict and insisted that forced inscription is prohibited in Burma.

¶3. (SBU) Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos Calderon underscored Colombia's commitment to protecting children, but was firm in rejecting the report's call for UN dialogue now with armed groups including the FARC and the ENL, likening this to negotiating with al-Qaeda. Santos stated that these groups are terrorist organizations, without humanitarian sensibilities, and that dialogue would be an "extreme step back," citing past experience dealing with these groups and hostage situations. Instead, Santos proposed that the CAAC monitoring and reporting mechanism work to support Colombian civil society and strengthen institutions, particularly efforts to bring armed groups to justice. Austria, Croatia, France, Japan, Turkey and the UK encouraged Colombia to, at a minimum, consider limited UN dialogue with armed groups within the context of UNSCR 1612. Russia agreed with Colombia's expressed reservations and China stated that the UN must respect the will of the country concerned, noting that Colombia is not on the agenda of the Security Council. The U.S. said that we support Colombia's wish that the conclusions of the WGCAAC expressly include the need for a permanent consultation process between the Colombian government and the UN country task force.

¶4. (SBU) Burundi Permanent Representative Zacharie Gahutu

welcomed the SYG's report and outlined recent progress, including the transfer of the last known children associated with armed groups to a reintegration center. Gahutu stated that Burundi is developing a comprehensive strategy on combating sexual violence, including systematic support for children. He noted that Burundi integrated child protection information into its military's pre-deployment training and passed laws prohibiting recruitment of persons below age 18. Employment of children in upcoming elections in polling stations or other positions is also prohibited. Gahutu stated that Burundi plans to continue positive policy choices to ensure continued progress while citing the need for continued international assistance. Delegations commended Burundi on its reintegration and demobilization of child soldiers and emphasized the need to combat impunity. Ugandan Deputy Permanent Representative Patrick Samuel Mugabwe Mugoya welcomed his country's delisting from the annexes of the SYG's report on children and armed conflict, and emphasized that it is no longer appropriate to include details on the LRA's violations within reports on Uganda, as the LRA has now moved out of the country. Delegations agreed with Uganda's position and stressed that the WCAAC should focus on regional cooperation and data collection.

15. (SBU) At the close of the meeting, Louis-Georges Arsenault, Director of UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programs, distributed a paper giving an overview of ten situations of concern and highlighted developments in Sri Lanka, the Central African Republic and the Philippines.
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